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Pulpit Preaching

VOL. XI, No. 1 JANUARY, 1958

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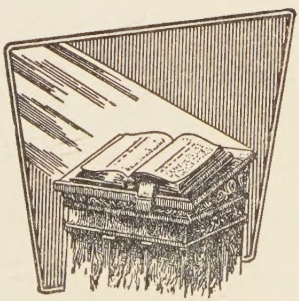

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EDITORIAL COMMENTS

The topics with which we begin the new year and the eleventh year of PULPIT PREACHING are "Lenten Emphases" and "The Prodigal Son." The February subjects will be "Words from the Cross" and "Psalm 23." The March themes will be "The Easter Confidence" and "Great Words of Faith: The Church," sermons for Pentecost, and the April emphases will be "What About the Lord's Day?" and "Lessons in Stewardship."

———o———

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

Pictorial History of Protestantism by Vergilius Ferm is a double sized and handsome book which portrays vividly the wide-ranging story of Protestantism's 500 years of growth. This volume, described as the most complete collection of etchings, drawings, lithographs, paintings, maps and photographs, deserves a wide circulation in churches, schools and homes. (Philosophical Library, 368 pp., $10)

Resources for Sermon Preparation by David A. MacLennan is a collection of his homiletical materials published regularly in **Church Management.** Adapted and revised for book publication, these materials are arranged according to the emphases of the church year and are adequately indexed. The author has the ability to compress great truths into a compact and stimulating form which is

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WORTH QUOTING

Edited by E. Paul Hovey

A young couple were in the studi audience at a Gary Moore televisio show and Gary singled them out fo introduction. He asked the wife i she were rich. She replied that the were not but they somehow manage to get along.

"Let's make them rich," sai Moore. "If each one of my listener will send in only a nickel or a dime we'll make them rich."

What happened? The nickels an dimes came in so fast that the coupl received about 135,000 pieces o mail, and over $12,000.

It just goes to show the tremend ous power of the Lowly Dime t build Mighty Dollars — if enoug people respond.

E. J. Meurer

* * *

The letters "I.Q." could also refe to "Internal Quality."

Elmer Bakken

* * *

A parish, contemplating a new ve ture, summoned all men to a dinn in presentation of the project. On man said, "Honestly, I stayed awa for fear that if I attended I might l interested.

Leon M. Adkins

* * *

David's fall looks like a sudden fa but there is always a preparation f such a fall. On an autumn day, goi through the woods, you put your fo down upon a fallen log, and imme

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Pulpit Preaching

CHARLES L. WALLIS . . . . EDIT
Pastor, Keuka College Church
Keuka Park, N. Y.

CHARLES L. ALLEN . . . . EDIT
Pastor, Grace Methodist Churc
Atlanta, Ga.

Address sermon manuscripts and
torial correspondence to Rev. C
Wallis, Keuka College, Keuka P
New York. Receipt will be ackn
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JOHN W. MEISTER
EVERETT W. PALMER
PETER H. PLEUNE
VICTOR WATTS
ARTHUR H. KOLSTI
DONALD E. COLLINS
HAROLD C. PHILLIPS

Lenten Emphases

TRUTH ON THE MARCH

John W. Meister, First Presbyterian Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth . . ." John 14:6.

Very often the best way to hide a thing is to lay it out in plain view. I remember, for example, a certain mystery thriller in which the murder weapon lay on top of a table in the living room throughout the entire three acts. The dramatist achieved the element of suspense precisely by the technique of having the characters all but touch the tell-tale weapon and then pass it by.

I suppose we have all had the experience of searching in all the closets, drawers, crannies and nooks of a room for some lost object, only to find it lying in plain view all the while.

This morning I want to relate our sermon to a truth which the architect and those who designed this building considered so important they laid it out in plain view for all to see, but which may be in such plain view that we pass it by. I refer to the truth embodied in, or symbolized in, the center aisle.

This feature of our building, like any other feature of good architecture, fits into place so naturally, so beautifully and so functionally that it seems simply "to belong" there. No further reason for its being seems necessary. Yet the center aisle in traditional church architecture serves as a dynamic and dramatic symbol of this great truth: The Christian life is a way of walking, not a way of talking.

On the night before He died, our Lord called to Him His closest friends. He spoke many comforting words, such as, "Let not your hearts be troubled . . ." and "Peace I leave with you . . ." But as always in the divine economy, these comforting words were inseparately mixed with challenging words. There was conflict in that Upper Room, as there is conflict wherever the spirit of Jesus is strongly felt. The conflict and tension that evening arose when Thomas and Philip revealed they had missed the central truth Jesus had been trying to demonstrate. Phillip wanted Jesus to "show us the Father" about whom He had been speaking, and Jesus had to tell him, in effect, "If you had seen Me — really seen Me — you would have seen the Father."

The other tense moment arose, according to John, when Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you . . . And you know the way where I am going." Thomas answered, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus answered him much as He answered Phillip. He said, in effect, "If you had known Me—really known Me—you would have known the way. I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

I

In this conversation we have revealed the great divide which separates the Christian faith and life from every other religion and ethical or philosophical system. Every other ethical or religious system of thought bases the good life upon a set of

principles, a list of rules, an outline of virtues and vices. The "good" person thereby becomes one who keeps the rules, who obeys the regulations. By such a plan life is fenced in by regulations and customs. So long as the adherent stays within the enclosed area, performing the virtues and avoiding the vices, he is considered the "good" or "righteous" person.

The most radical thing Jesus ever did or said was to strike a death blow at all such attempts to discover the good and righteous life. He cast aside all regulations — rather, he so superceded them with another standard that He likened even the Ten Commandments to milk that is given to new-born children when compared with the "meat and drink" He set before grown-up people. He substituted for all ethical systems and rules this audacious standard: Himself. "I am the way," he said. If you want to go to the Father and to His kingdom, go "by Me." "I am the truth," he said. If you want to penetrate to the heart of truth, have that mind in you which is in Me and think my thoughts after Me. "I am the life," he said. If any man is "in Me" he is a new creature, he has eternal life, and he will never die.

Notice what this means: the Christian faith is a life to be lived in obedience to Jesus Christ.

It means that the **whole** life must be lived in obedience to Jesus Christ. There are always some who try to think that the Christian faith applies to only a part of life or to only part of the time. Such a manner of thinking is indicated in one of Oliver Wendell Holmes' writings. "There is a little plant called reverence," he wrote, "in the corner of my Soul's garden, which I love to have watered about once a week." That reflects sweet sentiment which a lot of people even today would buy. At first hearing it sounds harmless and certainly it makes religious faith singularly unstimulating.

But it is not Christian thinking. We cannot divide our soul like we plan a garden and say, "Here is Reverence, here is Pride and here is Generosity. Today I shall water the section in Reverence and I shall be reverent. Tomorrow I shall water the plants in the area of Pride and I shall be prideful. The next day I shall be generous. But next Sunday I shall water the corner called Reverence once again."

Jesus wants our life, and life cannot be broken up into fractions. We are of one piece. If we have a hangnail, our whole body is on edge. If we are truly reverent, we are reverent in all that we do. Jesus wants all there is of us. It doesn't take much of a person to be a Christian, but it does take all of a person!

This conversation of Jesus means also, that the Christian life is a whole life **to be lived.** The Christian life is not something to be looked at or to hold opinions about. It is not a creed to subscribe to. There are some who believe, for example, that the Christian faith is a set of ideas to be tacked on to our own private opinions, much as we pin a badge on our coat lapel.

So far from that, the Christian life is a risk we take, a gamble we make. We live our life on the risk that Jesus is Truth. As Josiah Royce once said, "Faith is the soul's insight or discovery of some reality that will enable a man to stand anything that may happen to him in the universe." This you see, makes our Christian faith the presuppositions with which we face life, all of life.

Let me mix the figure of speech slightly. Paul Scherer once said, "Religion is like riding a bicycle: the only safety there is lies in riding. Otherwise you can't even stay on. Momentum is the secret of poise. You'll spend all the days of your pilgrimage being upset, until you learn to fling yourself on with such faith as you have."

II

Since the Christian life means that the whole life is lived in obedience

Jesus Christ, then it follows that uth is always to be found on the arch toward the Holy City. That is say, the truth that leads to life ust be found on the way to life. uth in the Christian sense is not island of facts or principles — en eternal principles — "out there" mewhere which may be observed d approached as something foreign the person of the seeker. Truth in e Christian sense is to be found the way that leads to life, in the ena of daily struggle, in the rough d tumble of making a living and ilding a life.

A more erudite way of explaining is characteristic of the Christian th comes from the Spanish writer, iguel Unamumo. Unamumo once d of an encounter he had with a vedish student of languages in the e of Mallorca. The philogist show- him, with a certain pride, the uits of his study in the Mallocran alect. Unamumo greatly doubted ny of the learned Swede's conclu- ns. He inquired how he had gone out his study. "Oh," said the other, inform those I meet that I am dying the way people talk in Mal- ca. I then ask them to tell me how ey say this, that and the other ng. My conclusions are based upon at they have told me."

"What they have told you," said amumo, "is how they know things ould be said, not how they actual- say them. Let me have a try."

The Spaniard devoted some time to ngling in his usual urbane way th all sorts of people, riding with em in their coaches, meeting them their native haunts. With great turalness and skill he turned each nversation into some realm where knew the real characteristic of the pular speech would emerge. Some ne later when he met his learned end again, he showed him his note- ok. "This is the way people talk in allorca," he said. And he added, ever forget that it is on the road at the truth is found."

Here is a parable of the way Christian truth is found by the follower of Christ. It is easy to read the Sermon on the Mount or a dissertation on Christian behavior and to describe by looking at Christ how a Christian should live. But only the disciple who enters into the life of Christ and seeks to live on the highway of life with that mind in him which was in Christ — only such a one can find Christian truth and reveal how a Christian does live. For only such a one is Christian.

I suppose the great Danish thinker Kierkegaard has best pointed up this characteristic of Christian truth as a way to be lived. In one of his writings he draws the distinction between an apostle of Christ and a professor of Christ. "The apostle," he wrote, "was a man who bore witness for Jesus Christ and suffered persecution in consequence of his witness; the professor was an observer who garnished materials for his lectures from the testimony and sufferings of Christ and his apostles, but who himself never bore witness and never suffered."

Kierkegaard imagined that near the Cross of Christ stood a man who beheld the terrible scene and then became a professor of what he had witnessed. He studied the drama of the Cross, but was never crucified with Christ. He studied apostolic history, but did not live apostolically. The living contemporaneousness of the Crucified meant nothing to him.

"So it ended," wrote Kierkegaard, "with the Apostles being crucified . . . and the Professor becoming professor of the crucifixion of the Apostles. Finally the Professor departed with a quiet, peaceful death."

All of this and more is caught up in the symbolism of the center aisle. Leading as it does from the outside world down the center of the church to the Communion Table — a visible symbol of the Presence of the Crucified One — this aisle reminds us that the Christian is one who is following

a Lord on the highway of life, a Lord who said, "I am the Way." He also said, "I am the truth, and the life."

We can find only real life and real truth while we are on the Way that leads to life, for truth is forever on the march and is to be found on the march!

CREED FOR HEROES

Everett W. Palmer, First Methodist Church, Glendale, California

> Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Ephesians 6:13.

That is the creed for heroes. Those words are trumpets of courage. They have sounded over many a battlefield of the spirit. They have been written around the world in the life blood of brave men. They spell out the biography of valiant souls in every generation who have ventured all for Christ. They are lighted by the flames of a million martyrdoms. They point to the universal, unchanging requirement for Christians.

Evil always is the weakling's way, the coward's choice. Any sissy can sin. Any milksop can ignore every high call of the soul.

But the way of Jesus Christ calls for stamina and courage beyond our resources, even "the whole armor of God." It summons us to cherish hopes too big for our little hearts, climb a high road too steep for our small strength, confront adversaries too mighty for our meager powers. It bids us risk all for victories only God can help us win.

I

This needs to be said because there is a long-lived, widespread rumor to the contrary. How often we meet the assumption that to be a Christian is sissy, that the Church is pious refuge for cowards and weaklings, that Christianity like nursery tales is acceptable merely for children and such women as may wish to do the telling.

When we were small lads hesitating on the threshold of what we knew was wrong, trying to muster the moral courage to say "no," the cry was, "Ah, come on! Don't be a sissy." Throughout youth temptation came to us claiming the virtues of manliness, even heroism, decrying the high way of Jesus Christ as soft and unmanly.

Some time ago a young blood of New York's high society was being sued for divorce by his wife on grounds of adultery with two correspondents. The news story carried a picture of his mother and a statement by her in which she excused his conduct saying, "I wouldn't give much for him if he didn't . . . He wouldn't be a son of mine if he stopped living." As if one stops living and becomes second class when he obeys the rules of chastity and common decency!

And she is not alone in that contention. What a host of novelists playwrights and Hollywood hacks make a lucious living glorifying the barnyard, putting halos over pigsties conducting swimming parties in cess pools! It's all brave, beautiful, and human, they chortle. "Come on," they urge, "forget this morality stuff Relax, let yourself go, have a good time, enjoy life."

Such heresy even slips into churches. Harry Emerson Fosdick is credited with this story about an anemic preacher. The clergyman was a lonely lean, spindly, ghostly looking fellow of pale, emaciated face, bony arms pipe stem legs; little more than a slightly animated cadaver. All in all he added up to quite a spectacle when he leaned over the pulpit as went his parish rounds. Finally H

good wife prevailed upon him to visit doctor. The results were astonishing. This thin, dyspeptic, sallow, flappy looking preacher began to put on weight, his cheeks filled out. He got spring in his step, some sparkle in his eyes, and his voice took on a manly tone.

And, lo, when this miracle had come to pass, it is said some of the good ladies of the parish went about lamenting, "Oh, dear, isn't it too bad. Our minister isn't spiritual any more." So far the blight has spread!

II

What prompts this slander against Christianity? Certainly not Jesus Christ. He was a Man among men. So regal was His manliness that even Pilate looked upon Him with awe to say, "Behold, the Man!" See Him standing up under the opposition and plotting of people in high places, forging ahead resolutely despite failure and threat of terrible death. See Him with love indomitable at last going His lonely way up an ugly hill, staggering under the burden of a Cross. Hear Him say, "If any man will bear my name in the world, carry on my work among mankind, let him take up his cross daily and follow me." Hear Him say that for the sake of the Kingdom of God one must be willing to forego if need be the comforts of home and family, even to sacrifice his possessions and give his life, to count it a blessing to be persecuted and and honor to die. No one can know the New Testament and justify the opinion that Christianity is sissy.

Nor is this slander supported by history. Time never fails to strip the glamour from sin and reveal it as a cowardly ugliness. On the stage of history it is the heroes who bear the banners of truth and goodness, not least those of Jesus Christ. It is the sissies who are the liegemen of evil.

Neither is this slander sustained by present-day people and events. Wherever one sees real Christianity in action there one sees not weakness nor cowardice but amazing strength and courage.

I am thinking of a lad away at college for the first time. Fraternity rushing is a blend of vulgarity and beer guzzling. He is subjected to social pressures on every side that urge betrayal of Christian standards, the teaching of his home and church. He is ridiculed, made the butt of many a joke. But with quiet courage he keeps a humble, friendly spirit, holds fast to his ideals, returns good for evil, and ere long wins respect and friends, and not least, friends for Jesus Christ.

I am thinking of mothers who have kept their families together against great odds, and reared their children to know God, love beauty, and live with honor; mothers who have suffered life's hardest blows and never whimpered or surrendered. What a benediction is their serene and steady courage!

I am thinking of men who have been content to be misunderstood and maligned, who have sacrificed profit or opportunity for promotion rather than betray what in Christ they knew to be the right.

I am thinking of a Methodist minister and wife in Clarksdale, Mississippi, where agitation against the Supreme Court ruling has been virulent. Several weeks ago a national Methodist leader in a movement promoting the life of prayer visited Southern California. His home is in Mississippi. We have read of the violent protest meetings, the threats, mobs, in that area. Christian leaders have been tried in the fire. He told of what happened on a Sunday morning recently at a Methodist Church in Clarksdale. The minister stepped down from the pulpit and stood level with the congregation, a hand resting on the altar rail. His face was haggard from weariness, his eyes bloodshot from sleepless nights. He looked out over the crowded church and quietly said, "There is a personal

word I must say to you as your minister. But first my wife wishes to come and stand beside me because what I shall say shall be for her, too."

After she had made her way up an aisle, they stood together. Then in that still church he continued, "Many have been taking a stand, giving witness in behalf of custom and tradition. We, too, must take a stand and give witness. We have thought long and prayed much, but Jesus Christ leaves us with but one thing to say, segregation is unchristian."

Now it is one thing for me to stand in this church and say, "Segregation is not Christian," as I have many times. It is another thing to stand up in Clarksdale, Mississippi, and say that, continue to live there and say that.

The summons of our text still finds answer in human hearts. Wherever you see people following Jesus Christ, facing tasks which drive them to their knees, making them know they must have courage and stamina beyond their making, even the full armor of God, there we witness not weakness but amazing strength, not cowardice, but astonishing courage. We have evidence that Christianity is a creed for heroes.

Then where does the slander come from? We know where it originates. It begins in that place where all of us make our alibis, where we resort when too lazy or too afraid to do what we know we ought to do. It is in that large storeroom whose door pushes open at our touch, where wait ready-made excuses which clothe evil in garments of virtue and demean goodness.

III

Hence, what is required in the name of reason and our salvation is realism.

Let us be realistic about sin, anything that falls short of the good, the true, and the beautiful which we know in Jesus Christ.

Take the sins of the flesh. Everyone at bottom is spawned of weakness and cowardice. Name one that is not.

Consider especially the popular vices by which a youth is tempted to practice to prove himself a man. Any moron can be profane. Profanity is the crutch of a mediocre or lazy mind. It is a weakling's substitute for the use of intelligence. It is reported there are more than 400,000 good and honest words in the English language of today, enough to express any worthy thought or emotion. They are available to anyone man enough to master and use them. Any weakling can buy attention and a laugh with a smutty story. To be a scavenger among garbage cans of the mind calls for no special brand of courage. And how brave must anyone be to nod in answer to, "Come on, how about having a drink?" It took the travail of the ages and the toil of God to bring forth the gift of human intelligence: judgment, self-control. But any fool can trade it off in an hour or so for a few cans of beer. It happens all the time. It took the death of Christ on the Cross to fashion Christian conscience. But any coward can smother and paralyze it with a few highballs. It happens all the time. Bring out your popular vices. Look them over. Not one is "smart." Not one is manly. Every one comes of weakness; most are spawned of cowardice.

Consider now the sins of the spirit. It is important for us of the Church to look at them. We sometimes sit back and congratulate ourselves, saying, "I'm a pretty good fellow. I don't swear, I'm not profane, I don't tell dirty stories, I don't patronize the liquor stores."

Look out! The sins of the spirit are far more deadly than the sins of the flesh, as we know full well. Need we name them? We know them all—on intimate terms. Look them over. Every one originates in weakness and cowardice, every one.

When we view evil with honest eyes, its tawdry glamor falls away

nd we see it for what it is: an ugli-
ess born of weakness, a shame fash-
oned of cowardice, a contradiction
f all things manly, a denial of all
ings noble.

Bring realistic about evil, may we
e realistic about righteousness, fac-
g the truth about the way of Christ.
is not a code of sterile inhibitions
hich rob life of its color, spontanie-
, and surging gladness. All to the
ntrary, it is release, freedom! It is
Divine Discontent, keeping us for-
er at war with our mediocrity, for-
er stretching toward what ought to
— perfection. It is a Divine Com-
lsion always driving us out of lit-
eness and meanness up the steep,
rd slopes of moral splendor. It is
vision whose radiance gives beauty to the soul, whose horizons bring healing and harmony to the heart. It is a yoke which teams man with God and makes of life the fulfillment of highest desire.

But let no one think it is easy. It is a summons to hopes too brave for our faint hearts, to a highroad too steep for our little strength, to face adversaries too mighty for our meager powers. It bids us risk all for victories only God can help us win. It is a creed for heroes. But at the end there can be the King's reward, and all the while the joy of His Presence.

"Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

AM IN DEBT

Peter H. Pleune, Highland Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Kentucky

I am debtor . . . Romans 1:14.

I am in debt. Aren't we all? Debts,
bts, debts! For many, the words
ng in the night like the rythmic
at of the tom-toms in some jungle
rkness. When I turn to my New
stament I find a man confessing
at he is head over heels in debt,
d is neither gloomy about, nor
hamed of it. Paul of all men! It was
who said that he would not be
argeable to any man, and in ac-
rdance with that policy worked at
nt-making during the day that he
ght preach at night. When he died
er fighting his good fight there
s no estate to settle, and there
re no unpaid bills. Yet he says
re that he was hopelessly in debt.
ain, aren't we all?

There are debts not to be conceiv-
of solely in terms of money. There
debts which we have incurred
the imperishable realms of know-
lge, wisdom, character and influ-
ce. We have received some things
this life that are more than an in-
itance or they constitute an obli-
ion. And if I were able to pay my debts in these things I would be doing what the wealthiest individual and the most powerful countries have never been ably fully to do.

I am speaking about my debts. You may not be interested in these in particular, but I know best about my own, and I speak of them in the assurance that, for the most part, your life is not a bit different from mine.

I

I am in debt. To begin with I borrowed my body. My body is not myself, but I could not myself have entered this world without a body. Where did I get it? Through my parents, but not from them. My body is composed of certain chemicals, so much iron and so much phosphate, and salt and soda and water. I got these from the earth beneath my feet. "The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground." I owe my body to the earth. It will return to the earth again, dust to dust and ashes to ashes, when I am through with it.

I owe someone for the care of this body in its helpless state. My helplessness in babyhood was another's call to watchfulness and ceaseless care. My baby hands were constantly outstretched for things I could not provide for myself. My every cry was a demand. A father's and mother's sacrifice of love was the song which rocked me to sleep.

I am indebted to someone that I was born into a Christian home. I might have been born in the jungles of Africa or the filth of China. I had no choice in the matter. I was born a healthy child. I owe it to someone else that I am not weak or puny or deformed. I am indebted to anothers clean living and stern self discipline. This boy of mine is a loan, in the first place, from the God who made it, but it is also something for which I am indebted to all who cared for it, and to every circumstance into which it came.

I was born into a land of opportunity and liberty, for all its difficulties the best spot on earth where many have struggled and many have died that blessings beyond all telling might be mine. Comfort, cleanliness, safety and health of body have been paid for by doctor and nurse and soldier, by patient inventor, by skilled mechanic and humble workman who have labored in risk and danger, in weariness and self forgetfulness. Alfred Noyes in his poem "The Last Voyage" tells the story of a little girl desperately ill on a trans-atlantic liner, who has no chance for recovery at all unless a very delicate operation is performed. The ship's physician does not know enough of the technique to perform the operation without advice. The captain has heard that the great Johns Hopkins specialist, Dr. Marlowe, who could do the job if anyone could, is on the ship, City of Paris, a ship in radio-phoning distance. The ship's doctor decides to get into contact with him and carry out his instructions step by step. Two travelers outside on the deck talk the situation over. One asks, "Do you think they'll save her?" The other replies, "They may save her, but who are they?" The obvious answer is that not only will the ship's doctor and Dr. Marlowe be saving the child, but the great host of men who made surgery and radio possible, and the list is a long one, beginning with the God who made the wonders possible. It is a parable of all our life. We are indebted for it to others, many others.

II

Then there is the home in which I live. It is very dear to me as yours is to you. It is the spot where I can retreat from the cares of my work and the disappointments of my life and in the shadow of its love and understanding I am made whole again. I sometimes take credit for that home as I remember what thought and anxiety and care on my part has gone into the making of it. But little of its blessing is due to me. I owe that to someone else. There is the life of her who in sacrifice and devotion far beyond my own has wrought, with the silken threads of a wife's purity and love and constancy, a strength that like cable chains holds that home together. There are the hands of a faithful daughter that helped to build it. I am in debt to them.

The strength of that home is from within, but not within alone. We could not have that home without many things beyond our power to provide. Its foundations rest in all the years that are gone. It stands protected by the sacred feeling in every human breast that has warmed to the glow of the thought of home. As long as the thought of home is precious in other hearts my home is safe, and only so long. If low standards of marriage, and false ideals of living come to prevail, other's homes will go and my home will go too. What other men think of purity, what other men regard as sacred and just and holy

volved in the possibility of my me. Whoever has laid down his fe for medical science, whoever has ade laws for cleanliness and health, hoever has dedicated his or her life education, whoever has labored to reach the gospel, whoever has strug-ed for peace, whoever has held in-olable their marriage vows, who-er has loved righteousness and liv-d nobly, whatever their place or sta-n has helped to maintain my home. am in debt to them all.

III

Then there is my mind, such as it I possess it as the fruit of other's bors and other's teachings. I have ofited by the reservoir of thought other minds freely available for y own. We talk about financial nounts for which European nations e indebted to the United States. It all idle chatter when one recalls hat we owe them for intellectual lture. There is the literature of akespeare and Milton and the ets. There are statesmen and scien-ts and doctors of the old world o were teachers of the new. The il runs back to Socrates and Plato d Aristotle. I do not know any-ng but what has come from some-e else. My faith is a faith that I d not discover for myself. It too me from others and from a dis-ce, from the prophets and martyrs d missionaries, from great souls e Luther and Calvin and Wesley. hall not be able to wipe out what due from me for those gifts in this rld or the next.

There is the shaping influence of ers on my character. I am a min-r of the gospel today because of instructions I imbibed from de-ed teachers in the Sunday School, cause of my parents who taught infant lips to pray and daily walk-before me in the way everlasting. ere are particular men and wo-n, whom, as I look back now, had nolding influence on my boyhood, finite names I could give you did they mean anything to you. The very fact of my remembering through the years the names and places and words spoken and deeds done by them reveals what I owe them. Their influence was not immediate, but without them I know that I would not be standing here. There is a boy's work secretary of a Y.M.C.A. whom I now know helped me and inspired me, though at the time, he could not have guessed it. I can well imagine that he put me down as one of his failures. He had every reason to do so. In later years I tried in vain to trace him in the national Y.M.C.A. organization that I might let him know what I owe to him. I can only thank God for his telling example and self-sacrificing toil, and for all those who labored with me, not wholly I trust in vain.

While I am writing this sermon my books are all about me, the inestimable gift of the best of others' lives and spirits. I am myself, plus these friendly and blessed volumes. It is needless to mention the Bible. It covers everything within the scope of living, and adds fresh life to the weary and hopeless who read it for courage and consolation. My books are a stream of life to my soul with the Bible at its fountainhead.

I am in debt to the people of this church. No one can be a minister without the uplift and inspiration from the rank and file of the members of the church. They give the minister too much credit. They are the ones who keep the minister going. In the wildest day-dreaming in my youth I could never have come up with a situation for myself comparable to the reality for me of these years. What I owe to you is past all telling.

IV

The net result of a backward glance at my creditors in the things of the spirit is the conviction that I am hopelessly bankrupt. What then can I do about it? I can count it, for

one thing, as a challenge to gratitude. I can get down on my knees and humble my pride and thank God for all that enriches my life with which I had nothing to do. I can take stock of my possessions and find every spiritual blessing unimpared. I can stop ever being sorry for myself. I can be honest with God. I can admit the truth that none of my troubles have ever been from his hand. I can remember that he has done more for me than I deserve. I can refrain from trying to find my comfort in finding fault with others. I can, I hope, come up out of the cellar, and in the words of the hymn, "I can look up and laugh and love and lift."

And it is true, is it not, that what I owe we all owe? What a blessing it would be if we were as sensitive to the common rule of honesty in our relation with God as we try to be in our dealings with our fellow men. We owe to God, and to those who in his name have blessed us, that we begin to live our Christian life instead of just talking about it. Living Christ's life is paying our debt. And we cannot really live his life without sharing it. Sometimes you may not know how you are blessing others and paying your debt but you are.

When the Moravian missionaries went to Greenland they were unable during the first years to make any impression whatever. Then came an epidemic of smallpox in which multitudes died. The missionaries went about among them ministering to the sick in the Master's name. After that all was clear. The people said, "You have nursed us in our friendless distress, you have buried our dead when the dogs would have devoured them; now tell us of your religion, for from this time forth your God shall be our God."

The coin in the realm of God is Christian living and Christian service. We can never hope to repay in full him who hung upon the cross and became sin for us, but what we do pay must be paid in that currency of Christian living and Christian service. And then, finally, if I try to pay some of my debts, and you yours, we will remember that some of what we owe to those who come after us. An inheritance of obligation for spiritual blessings that we ourselves have received is the best thing we can leave to our children. Some of the material things we once planned to leave them may be out of the question now. Quite possibly they will be all the better for that. But to leave them in debt to us for a manly courage in a disturbed world, a confidence in the unseen, an example of Christlike living, a knowledge of the power of prayer, and a pattern of Christian hope and faith and love will not only bless them, but will do something to take our own life out of the red in ledgers of God.

I AM DEBTOR

Victor Watts, Andersonville Baptist Church, Andersonville, Tennessee

I am debtor both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. Romans 1:14.

We are direct recipients of God's blessings. Along with these blessings there is a heavy charge. God placed upon Abraham a serious commission or command: "And be thou a blessing." We often overlook that Abraham was not being blessed for his own sake. Each blessing became a trust for which he was responsible. He was to be a channel through which God's bounties were to be passed to others. This commission, to be a blessing, was intended not only for Abraham but all his descendants.

This lasting principle is a good indication of all of God's dealings with men. With every blessing there is a corresponding obligation. What is t

be received is to be discharged or hared with others. There is unique- ess in the purpose of God to make imself known in the fulness of his glory. Obligation falls directly on hose who are recipients of this glory.

Paul keenly felt his responsibility o impart some spiritual gift to oth- rs, and was given a primal place ecause he was an instrument for ac- omplishing the universal purpose of God. Paul was a devout Jew, but he loriously overcame his race prejud- ce and religious exclusiveness in the ealization that Christ died for all nen and that whosoever believed night be saved. The fact that Paul vas a chosen instrument for bearing he saving gospel to the non-Jewish eoples is plainly evident in his let- ers.

God revealed his intention to Paul t his conversion. Ananias, the dis- iple of Damascus, appointed to peak to Paul after his conversion xperience, was hesitant to welcome im into the Christian fellowship be- ause he had so recently been per- ecuting the Christians. But the Lord aid to Ananias, "Go thy way: for e is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear ıy name before the Gentiles, and ıe children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

The theme of spiritual universalism seen running through the letter o the Romans. It begins and ends ith the statement that Paul's apos- eship was designed to be "among ll nations" (1:15; 16:26). The idea in omans is that the Jew is considered rst and then the Greek; however, ıere was no difference between ıem. Both must come to Christ ırough faith.

Paul says in Romans 1:14: "I am ebtor both to Greeks and Barbar- ns, both to the wise and to the olish." Here Paul keenly feels his irect obligation to impart spiritual ifts. He confesses that he is greatly debt and is not ashamed of it. It important to inquire into this debt. ndeed, it is an obligation which sts upon us all.

Paul realized that the Greeks had contributed much to his life. From them he had received language, the common tongue from India to Spain. He received culture from them. Luke records his quoting from the Greek poets on Mars Hill. But most of all, perhaps, he received from them a quality of mind. In that event his debt to the Greeks would have been great indeed.

Nevertheless, this debt is synonymous with the word duty. It is an ought of tremendous importance. His debt to the Greeks was threefold. He could teach them, as his experience of Corinthian morals reminded him, that a cultural heritage could not save men from moral weakness, and that from such weakness deliverance could be found in Christ.

He could teach them, secondly, that the Greek mind would tend to make its mental interest an end in itself and not a means to a great action. The Greek spirit needed a renewal which Christ could impart, a renewal to which Paul could bear effective witness in his life and in his converts.

The third message to the Greeks from the center of his Christian experience was the sharp lesson that culture does not necessarily guarantee vital fellowship.

To the Barbarians he would offer a two-fold truths. The first would be the fact of personal transformation in Christian conversion. He had seen proof of this great power in all of his ministries. The second would add to this individual testimony the evidence that even primitive people could, by the grace of Christ, become a new community and make possible an outpouring of the creative Spirit of God.

From this we plainly see the immensity of Paul's feeling of indebtedness. He felt that he owed something to the Greek and Barbarian because he had been set free in Christ. The bondage of sin which formerly incited him to such unmerciful action

against God's people was the terrible yoke from which he was freed. Through the gospel he was given light, and life and power; it had transformed his whole existence. Did he not, therefore, owe a deep debt to those who had not learned this high, wonderful level of life and freedom in Christ?

II

How is such a debt incurred? It came upon us originally by our creation in the likeness of God; in this way we are made members of one great family. It was because of the love of God that we were made. God willed to glorify himself through man. All men belong to God because of the fact that we are his by creation. It is to us that he wills to impart himself; he desires the fellowship of man, and he expects us to share this fellowship with one another. We have an obligation to our kinspeople of mutual love and helpfulness. We are further indebted by reason of divine grace in which we see God "bending down" over man. And how much more we are indebted when we have become members of the Kingdom of God through his great redemptive plan! We profess to be Christians. We are a chosen people. We must impart to others all the loving kindness and tender mercy of Christ.

We must realize that it is a debt owed to God, in the first place, and then to all men. "Go ye into all the world."

Peoples everywhere are suffering a need for spiritual gifts and for comfort. Since we are a chosen people, we are obligated to do something about it. The first thing to do is to acknowledge the debt. This is a matter of common ethics. Be not a tramp. Be not an embezzler. Be a trustee. Our Lord made a last will and testament in which he left the unsearchable riches of the gospel to all men. These riches are entrusted to our distribution. We are responsible to God and to needful men.

Hugh Stowell of England has clearly illustrated the weight of the trust that is committed to us. He writes: "In the Isle of Man, as I was one day walking on the seashore, I remember contemplating with thrilling interest an old grey tower covered with ivy. There was a remarkable history connected with the spot. In that tower was formerly hanged one of the last governors the island ever possessed. He had been accused of treachery to the king during the time of the Civil Wars, and received sentence of death. Intercession was made on his behalf, and a pardon was sent; but the pardon fell into the hands of his bitter enemy, who kept it locked up and the governor was hanged. His name is still honored by the Manx. We must all feel horror struck at the fearful terpitude of that man, who, having the pardon of his fellow creature in his possession, could keep it back and let him die the death of a traitor. But let us restrain our indignation till we ask ourselves whether God might point his finger to most of us and say, 'Thou art the man! Thou hast the pardon in thy hands to save thy fellow creatures, not from temporal, but eternal death. Thou hast a pardon suited to all, sent to all, designed for all; thou hast enjoyed it thyself, but thou hast kept it back from thy brother instead of sending it to the ends of the earth.' "

III

Having recognized that the pardon is in our hands, that the debt is ours, the next thing to do is to discharge our duty. Go preach the gospel. Go pay your honest debt to God. It is a debt of gratitude.

Jesus reminds us that we are responsible to the whole world when he says in John 10:16 that there is to be "one flock, one shepherd." The disciples indeed had an intimate concern for those to whom they ministered daily, but the fact also is that they had an eye turned to the flock, the

arger mission field, with a view to mbracing all people in the Kingdom f God.

Our individual churches today have n urgent need to tell of the love of God to their own people. But, because they have not been taught ctively to engage in sending the ospel to others, they fail to look o the larger flock which has but one hepherd, Jesus Christ.

Many of us have a sympathetic nowledge of the necessity and importance of missionary activity at ome and in foreign fields. We are ager to stress the need for proclaiming the gospel to hungry souls with view to gaining more active participation by our people. In fact, the ubject of missions has been emhasized so much that some Christns seem to say, "It is getting on y nerves." People who are thus irtated should be reminded that there re two sets of nerves, sensory and otor; and they could well be asked e question, "On which set of your erves does this subject bear the arder?" It should lead all Christians recognize the responsibility that is n their shoulders. A former foreign ission secretary, Dr. T. Rankin, has elated an incident which typifies the titude of many. He encountered a dy on the street with whom he talkd concerning missions. She said, "I'm t going to give another dime for reign missions until wars in such aces as China are ended." To this r. Rankin replied, "Lady, the rean those wars are going on is beuse you have not given one dime." the gospel is not sent, or taken by , there can be no hope for better nditions in many countries. Indeed, if we cannot go ourselves, we must be willing to send our generous contributions, our love, our sympathy, our prayers, until we have done our utmost to evangelize the world.

Peter urged all Christians to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God (I Peter 4:10). If any Christian received a gift, he was to pass it on to others. No gift that God gave to one person was to be exclusively used by that person; it was given to him as a steward, to be cared for and administered to others. We are stewards of the grace of God. This grace is manifold. It includes everything we have received from God for all is of grace. But the most precious gift is the saving gospel. This gospel is ours, not for our sake alone, but as a trust which we are to accept and pass on to others.

We have an obligation to God and to our fellow men to deliver in an effective way, near and far, the message which God has entrusted to you. Do not try to shift the debt to others. The president of an active woman's missionary society retorted when her nineteen year old son received and accepted his call to forsake his family and friends and take up his work in a foreign field: "Oh, no! Not you, my son! Send anyone else!" It is this attitude, this insistent failing to grant permission for our loved ones to go, this refraining from going ourselves, in person or otherwise, that is crippling the expansive purpose of God in the world. If the call is to go, let us go; if the call is to give in order that others may go, let us gladly participate in making Christ known to all the world.

HADES OF CALVARY

Arthur H. Kolsti, Lyonsville Congregational Church, La Grange, Illinois

They begged him to leave their neighborhood. Matthew 8:34.

If you had occasion to travel in rtain parts of Europe in the years llowing World War II, you would have noted an occasional sign reading, "American, Go Home." These signs were simply inviting an army of

occupation to leave. There is little doubt that at root they were part of the propaganda ammunition of Cold War. But this sentiment found some reception in the minds of those who were tired of the problems involved by the presence of a foreign army on their home soil.

There was the initial wave of enthusiasm upon liberation, but even liberation had its price. As the post-war months passed, the desire grew among many to see an end to all signs of occupation. I doubt that any of us would relish the long-term quartering of an alien army in our community, especially since armies are not always well-behaved. We might add here that our young men who enter military service and do overseas duties have the opportunity to fill the real need of being Christian Ambassadors.

With such thoughts, turn to the experience of Him who came to bring us the liberation of God, the experience of Jesus. We like to think of Him as being well-received and popular. That he had the ability to draw crowds, there is little doubt. The record speaks for itself. That He was universally well-received, however, was not always the case. There were several occasions when the response to His military was something else than joyful.

Quite often we hear someone, read out the text, "And the common people heard Him gladly." The argument is then made that if the gospel is preached as Jesus preached it, the crowds will flock in. If those who quote the text would take the time to look it up in the gospel, they'll find that in this particular situation, Jesus had been criticising the scribes and pharisees. Certainly he received a glad hearing when he was centering down on the high and mighty. But we want to look at certain other occasions. We recall the day in Nazareth when he was led to the edge of town and narrowly escaped being thrown down a hill. We think of His own testimony to the unwelcomed reception in Bethsaida and Chorazin. We think of the closing days of His life. We think of the incident in the country of the Gadarenes. As He went His way, time after time He experienced resistance whenever men caught some of the full implications of His presence. It was as if men would post signs along His way, "Jesus, Go Home."

If Jesus were to return to our community, it is difficult for us to imagine anything but a joyous reception. But is it possible that the case might be otherwise? Jesus and his companions alight from a boat by a quiet little town on the shores of Galilee. As they proceed to town they are met by a strange reception committee. In Matthew we read of two demented men. Luke and Mark with their more extensive accounts tell of one man possessed of a thousand devils. Evidently the local burial grounds were the dwelling places of the mentally deranged. At any rate this is quite a meeting. The two men are healed and somehow a herd of swine are excited into a disastrous stampede. The herdsmen rush to town to tell of the incident. As Jesus and His party resume their way, they are soon met by quite a different reception committee. This group quietly and respectfully ask Jesus to leave their community. He obliges them by heading back to His boat.

It must have been experiences such as this that led Jesus to that fearsome conclusion that Matthew records in these words, "From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed." But, as we think of this incident in the country of the Gadarenes we want to make an important observation. Jesus met here two kinds of opposition, one of outright hostility and the other passive; one that minced no words, the other polite.

I

Consider the first of the two. As they approach the town the madmen rush across their path and shout defiently: "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" We would, naturally, expect this sort of greeting from these deranged personalities. Evil is naturally opposed to good, sickness opposed to health, the unholy opposed to the sacred. In totalitarian nations we expect the church to receive only unfavorable treatment. We have been told time and time again, for example, by Communist leaders that their system has no place for God, nothing to do with Jesus. We expect resistance when the gospel confronts outright evil conditions in the community. "What have you to do with us?" In how many forms has that statement been made — "What does religion have to do with political or economic matters?" Evil conditions naturally resent the restoring presence of the gospel.

Now mark the second sort of resistance. Jesus and party resume their approach to the town. Now a dignified committee of townspeople meets Him. We can imagine this group contained some of the leading citizens. Their request is polite and placed with respect. Yet, it is to the point — "Please leave us alone." As far as Jesus was concerned, these good folks were placing a "Do Not Disturb" sign over the community.

Now, let's get back to our own community. Could we imagine a similar response to the arirval of Jesus? Would we possibly want to send out a committee drawn up of representatives of the chamber of commerce, real estate associations, and property owner groups, and other civic bodies? Would we instruct such a committee: "Tell this man to leave?" Do the attitudes of the solid citizens on the shores of Lake Michigan have anything in common with those citizens on the shore of Lake Galilee?

In Bible reading, try to find where you fit into the script. Soren Kiebregard called this process "The Mirror of the Word of God." One ought to read as a participant. The story is told of a church school teacher who had just led his class in a study of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. By way of test, he asked, "Now what do you get out of this Parable?" One little boy replied, "What I get out of it is that when I'm in trouble, someone ought to come and help me." It is so easy for us to miss the point.

So we ask, do we share anything with good townfolk who met Jesus? We begin our answer by asking, "Just what was it that made Jesus so unwelcome?" I suggest a reason that can be simply stated — "Jesus disturbed the prevailing habits of life." He had just calmed the storm on the lake; now he rouses quite another type of storm. These folks were troubled by the change Jesus made. In many ways we share the same sort of apprehension and anxiety whenever Jesus makes his approach.

Luke and Mark both give fuller accounts of this incident. This town was no different from many another. On the outskirts of the town was the burial ground. Here, the mentally deranged were forced to live. Everyone had accommodated himself to this arrangement. There are certain sections in every community that are not mentioned by the Chamber of Commerce. We know they exist, but we accommodate ourselves to their existence. So, in this little town, the people were content with this arrangement. They had no desire to see it changed.

II

Jesus, of course, wherever he went brought with him a new habit of life. When he met the demoniacs, it is not unusual that he did something.

Human need, after all, was the dominating concern of his life. The pattern of life in this town was one that prolonged a situation of human misery. Jesus did something about it. In the course of his action, He effected a change in the usual order of things. The townspeople were apprehensive about this change. Now these terrible men consigned to the tombs would be back walking around the streets. Who knows what would happen next? Why, this will not be a decent community in which to live!

Luke's account of this incident tells us that the townpeople tried to bind the madman with chains and fetters; when he burst his chains, they just left him in the tombs. These folk had a chains-and-fetters philosophy about human problems, a philosophy familiar enough to us. How many still seek to solve community problems by violence and force? To some, the only answer to the race problem is homemade bombs and rocks. If the love of Christ was not at home among the Gadarenes, it is certainly still not at home in many American communities. We continue to hear of violence in industrial disputes. The Gadarene school of treatment still prevails.

Jesus introduced personal concern into this town, something they lacked. We are told that this healing resulted in the suicidal stampede of a herd of pigs. In this case, the proclamation of the gospel involved an economic loss in the community. When the villagers petitioned Jesus to leave, they were in effect saying, "You care for persons, we care for pigs." Theirs was a concern for property at the expense of persons Jesus, on the other hand, cared supremely for persons. Whatever condition in the community that prevents human personality from achieving its God intended fulfillment, was for Him a condition to be set aside.

This, then, was an ironic turn of events. These good villagers evidently feared sanity more than insanity. They feared man in his right mind. How many folk share their fear? How many prefer the madness of prejudice to the sanity of brotherhood? How the tyrant prefers the man blinded by power to the man whose eyes are open to the truth. Yes, Jesus disturbed this community, for with him came the love, compassion and righteousness of God.

It might be well to add a footnote about personal concern in our own nation. We are a people who have been proud of our property, our mines and factories, cities and farms. In recent years, we've been rightly concerned with our national defense. Much money goes into armaments to protect this piece of property called the United States. Yet I wonder if our political leaders may not forget that our only real property is our human property. Out of the Book of Judges rises the figure of Goliath to remind us that a nation may have the ultimate in material resources, but without a spiritual core, she is just a hulking piece of armor. Is it possible that we could perfect the atom bomb, develop the finest aircraft, produce intercontinental guided missiles, and yet be a defenseless nation? Our real strength is our human strength, and perhaps our legislators ought to walk through our crowded schoolrooms, attend the sessions in an overworked juvenile court, listen to the statistics on mental health. In the midst of all our property, what is happening to the person?

III

Jesus was asked to leave simply because he disturbed the prevailing habits of life. He has a way of doing that, of disturbing us. We remember how Jesus sat at the table with Zaccheus, and so disturbed that little man that he became filled with shame at the habits of his life. He has a way of making us question the mode of our life, of leading us to doubt our idols. His presence is a disturbing presence.

When I read the daily newspaper, never pass by the lovelorn column. ne other day there appeared this tter in one such column. It's a most structive letter and relates to this atter of the disturbing power of sus:

"Dear Ann Landers: A year ago if yone told me I'd be reading an gony column, much less writing in r advice, I'd never have believed it. ut I need help and I think you can ve it to me, so here goes. Our only n will soon be 17. He's brilliant his studies and popular, too. I've ilt a successful contracting business om the ground up. I've worked hard establish something my son could ep in to. A year ago the boy started talk some nonsense about becom- g a medical misisonary. My wife d I thought he'd outgrow this fool- ness and come down to earth. Last ght he told us he's investigating e-med courses with his school advis- . We're heartbroken to think of this ne, capable boy burying himself in me hole in India or Africa. This is K for a poor kid whose family can't fer him much, but our son could ve the world with a fence around He sees your column every day, on. Will you please tell him to have little respect for his parents' feel- gs? Has he been reading too many vels, or doesn't he have any brains? ownhearted Dad."

Perhaps this young man has been ading an old book called the New stament. How we wish more of r young and older folks would read is particular book, that its message ght hold, attract and inspire. Here's modern instance of Jesus disturbing human habits and plans. The request of these parents is the old request of the Gadarenes, "Please, Lord, Go Away." Evidently, these good folks have never heard of Albert Schweitzer.

One sentence is of special interest, "Our son could have the world with a fence around it." But isn't that just our trouble? We have the world with too many fences around it. Color lines, national lines, political fences — everyone trying to enclose and protect his little corner of the world. That town on the shores of Galilee had a fence; Jesus tried to break it down.

We can have the world with a fence around it, if we want. It will be a selfish world and we'll always be worried about the fellow on the other side of the fence. But God will give us the world without a fence. Said Paul, "All things belong to you." Not just your house and land — this community belongs to you. This church belongs to you and — the world. "And, you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God."

Jesus was invited to leave and he left. But they did not get rid of Jesus so easily. The two former madmen stayed behind. Jesus went, but He left behind his witnesses, those who would remind the townspeople of the wondrous work of this strange visitor. Try as it will, the world cannot get rid of the disturbing influence of Jesus. Evan on the Cross, he was not silenced by death. As the centurion in Masefield's play reminds us — He's now abroad in the world where neither Roman nor Jew can stop his truth.

'IRITUAL ATROPHY

Donald E. Collins, First Methodist Church, Butler, Alabama

There seems to be one word that presses normalcy in all areas of e, and that word is growth. A busi- ss enterprize that ceases to grow a competitive society soon dies. A church that does not grow in every phase of its ministry is dying and soon will become ineffective. And the individual who does not grow "in Christ" is also dying. Paul suggests

to the Ephesians that a Christian is one who "grows up into Him in all things which is the head, even Christ."

Medical science teaches us that the muscles of the body have a tendency to loose their vitality and strength when they are not used. A broken arm or leg placed in a cast, thus prohibiting the use of those muscles will be smaller and weaker. And if a limb of the body should be placed in idleness for a long enough period, it would loose its entire usefulness. This withering or dying of the muscles through lack of use is called, in medical terms, atrophy.

I

I should like to suggest that atrophy affects the soul in much the same way that it affects the muscles. The Christian who does not exercises and use his Christian experience will soon discover that his spiritual life is withering away. Spiritual growth should be as normal to the Christian as physical growth is to the child; and as children of God we should be just as alarmed when we fail to develop mature Christian lives as any parent would be if his child failed to develop mature bodies or minds.

There is a "spiritual" that captures this idea in an often repeated line, "I mus' keep a'movering along." Truly this is God's must for all His children. The challenging invitation and command of His word is, "Let us go on unto perfection." To stand still is to become prey to the devastating disease of spiritual atrophy and ultimately to be paralyzed of soul.

The pathetic truth about many Christians, however, is that the only exercise they ever give their souls is the Sunday morning hour of worship, or perhaps a half-attentive five minutes at the beginning or close of the day — when they don't forget even that. We have become, in our Christian living, somewhat like the little boy on his rocking horse. He makes a great amount of motion with his rocking — but no progress. W too, go through the motions Christian living, but our lives a shallow and empty, and we seldon if ever, make any progress in becon ing more Christ-like. "Having a for of Godliness, we deny the powe therefore."

II

The tragedy of this spiritual atr phy is revealed in the complete i ability of those affected to cope wit real crises in their lives when the need to call upon some reservoir strength. This truth is classically i lustrated by an incident that occure in the Alleghany Mountains.

Embosomed deep in these mou tains lies an artifical lake which ser es as a reservoir to supply water f a busy neighboring village. A fe summers ago this area suffered severe draught, and the little strea that fed this artificial lake dwindle to tiny threads. The waters of th reservoir sank to their lowest lev and a water famine was experience The water to the village was sh off, save for a few hours each day

Less than a hundred miles aw from this village lies a smaller la nestled among the mountains. In i center is a spring of unlimited abun ance. In the summer of this disa trous draught, this lake did not si even one inch from its normal leve and the village that tapped its r sources had an abundance of wate

Now the difference that existe between the natural lake with i replenishing spring and the ma made lake with its water famine parallel to the difference betwe the Christian who grows in his rel tionship to God and the Christi who is decadent because of atroph

III

There must be a continuous supp of power coming into our lives we are to maintain the warmth heart, serenity of mind, and streng of soul that accompanied our initi Christian experience. For witho

s continuous growth we become ed-up lakes. A time of draught, ne crisis, comes into our lives and find that we have no reservoir spiritual strength to tap in our time need. We have become paralyzed iritually through atrophy. Our urgt need is growth!

The day after the atomic bomb was opped on Hiroshima, the leading inkers of the Western world cried t with a most amazing unity that an must now become a new creare if he is to survive. He must grow character, in morality, in justice. e of the Christian church must go step further and say that if Christianity is to survive, then we who call ourselves Christian must experience new growth in our spiritual concepts. No longer can we be indifferent to the personal demands of Jesus upon our lives. We must somehow incorporate within the framework of our daily living that spirit of Christ that was not hindered by prejudice, self-love, jealously, hatred, and vain pride; but rather was patient, understanding, forgiving, tolerant, and loving.

The call of God continues to ring out to us to shake ourselves free from this decaying atrophy and "grow up into Christ in all things."

HE RUSSIAN SATELLITE AND GOD

Harold C. Phillips, First Baptist Church, Cleveland, Ohio

We are to think today of an event at is very much on our minds and r hearts. On the fourth of October e Soviet Union announced that it d successfully launched the first rth satellite. This satellite, at an titude of 560 miles, circled our obe at a speed of 18,000 miles an ur or five miles per second. The portance of this announcement lies t only in the fact of the revolving tellite. It lies also in this: The abil of the Russians to launch it means at they now have long-range interntinental missiles. These missiles ust be of such power that they uld be used, if and when they so sired, to shoot hydrogen warheads us with devastating results. Let us ink then of the Russian satellite d God.

Perhaps first we should say a word the effect of their achievement on . For if we have been in a kind of ce with them as is generally supsed, then they have won the race. think their success may have had chastening effect on our spirits. If at be true it is all to the good. We ve been somewhat cocky about our ientific ability and "know how." We ve assumed that totalitarian remes which deny and suppress freedom were no match in creative and inventive prowess for a freedom loving people like ourselves. Apparently we were mistaken. As Dr. Nassau, head of our Case Observatory, said in referring to the Russian achievement, "Humbleness is a virtue. And we have not had humbleness. It is time for us to realize that the Russians are just as good as we are scientifically."

Their success does not necessarily mean that their scientists are better than ours. It means that in this race for scientific supremacy the Communists are more determined, more committed, more willing to make sacrifices than are we. While we spend so much of our energy and wealth in building beautiful automobiles, televisions, refrigerators and innumerable gadgets to make life more comfortable, they deny themselves all this, have a vastly lower standard of living, and concentrate on their main objective. "This one thing I do," seems to be their motto.

One cannot visit their universities as some of us did a year ago without realizing that this discipline reaches down to the students. They are much more serious minded than our students. The idea of college as being

a place "to have a good time," the weeks full of social engagements, is completely foreign to their thinking. They work under the strictest and severest requirements. To put it all in a word, the rulers of Russia believe that to conquer the world they must keep ahead of the free world in the scientific field, and they are willing to sacrifice everything else to achieve that end.

Now let us forget about the Russians. They did what we would like to have been the first to do and no doubt will soon accomplish. Let us rather think of this satellite as being another step on the road to man's mastery of nature.

I

In the first place then let us say something about modern man's attitude toward nature. Surely there can be nothing wrong in man's progressive mastery of nature. In the Biblical account of the creation God gave man dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. But if over the fish of the seas, why not the sea? And if over the birds of the air, why not the air? And if over the air, why not beyond the air to the vacuous reaches of interstellar space? Man's progressive mastery of nature then seems to be in line with the purposes of the Creator who through man, made in His image, is still creating, carrying on the creative process.

If this be so, and it is hard to see how it could be otherwise, then this latest conquest of man should be the occasion for rejoicing. We should all be glad, we should be humbly proud, that man through prolonged, patient, even sacrificial effort has unlocked another of the secrets of the Creator, secrets waiting to be discovered by those who ask, seek, and knock.

But just the reverse is true. We are not happy. We are disturbed. This achievement has awakened not appreciation but apprehension. We are wondering now, what next? And we await the answer not in the spir of those who watch for the daw but rather fear the deepening of th darkness.

Why is this? I suggest, becaus man in his dealing with nature ha thrown out the God behind nature In exploring the creation he has fo gotten the Creator. This is a seriou omission. If nature is only "blin force and omnipotent matter," tha is one thing. But if as the poet sing

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God,

that is something else.

The Bible has always held tha God is behind nature. Dr. Paul Ti lich, now at Harvard, reminds us three attitudes the men of the Bibl have maintained toward nature. Th psalmist, when he considers th heavens, its beauty and majesty glories in nature. He is awed by i "What is man, that thou art mindfu of him?" The apostle sees the traged of nature — "The whole creatio groaneth and travaileth in pain toge her until now." The seer of Revela tion sees the salvation of nature — new heaven and a new earth, wit the tree of life whose leaves are fo the healing of the nations. But whe ther men saw the beauty of nature the tragedy of nature, or the redemp tion of nature, always they saw Go behind and in nature. They neve forgot that behind the creation stoo the Creator.

This belief which pervades th Bible is especially evident in the Ne Testament. To our Master nature wa a book from the hand of God. Th lilies of the field, the birds of the ai the sower and his seed, the sunse that reddened the sky: all this wa God's handwriting. In the Christma story, angels and stars, men an animals, adore the Christ child. Whe he was crucified nature responde The sun hid its face, darkness fel and the earth shook. And when h conquered death the sun shone agai as though to signal the dawning

ew day. This means that there is the Biblical view something sa- mental in nature. At the Lord's le bread and wine, the fruits of earth, are used to convey the pest spiritual truths of our reli- n.

his view of nature is shared by ers. Louis Agassiz would begin lectures by saying, "Gentlemen, shall now seek to know God's ughts after Him." Samuel B. rse, the inventor of the telegraph, as the first message, "What hath wrought!" The scientist Dr. C. Coulson speaks of science as "a nite religious activity, a revela- of God" and "one aspect of God's ence." George Washington Car- who made such amazing dis- eries with the lowly peanut, said in his scientific researches he he was working with God, in attitude of prayer. The Biblical v of nature is voiced in Joseph ison's great hymn:

he spacious firmament on high
ith all the blue ethereal sky,
nd spangled heavens a shining frame,
heir vast original proclaim:
he unwearied sun from day to day
oes his Creator's power dis- play,
nd publishes to every land
he work of an Almighty hand.

he difference between these two vs is tremendous. When a man eves that in working with nature is working with nature's God, overing the hidden secrets of His dom and power, he is never boast- conceited or arrogant. Like Al- Einstein, he bows reverently be- the mysterious. He feels with ses before the burning bush that place whereon he stands is holy nd.

ow as we think of this satellite ling our globe we confront a lly different situation. This is 's conquest of nature divorced from the God of nature, and the difference is literally all the difference in the world. It is one thing to say, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." It is quite another thing to say, "The heavens declare the cleverness of man, and the firmament shows his prestige and power." It is one thing to say as we unlock the secrets of nature, "Gentlemen, we shall now seek to know God's thoughts after Him." And quite another, like some little bantam rooster, to climb on your perch, flap your wings and crow about it, so the world may be moved to revere you or be frightened into submission to your will.

When viewed in the Biblical context, this satellite reminds us of the wonder of God who reveals His secrets to the inquiring mind of man. The fact that the confessedly godless discovered this secret proves nothing. In some ways the Creator does not seem to be too particular. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." He said to Cyrus, a pagan, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." In the modern context on the contrary t h i s satellite symbolizes man's greatness or ingenuity, the creation without a Creator. No wonder we are apprehensive.

II

It follows in the second place that the satellite in its modern context represents power divorced from the purposes of God. This is an inevitable result of leaving God out of nature. For if our scientific achievements are solely a tribute to man's greatness or cleverness, why should he not use them in any way or for whatever purpose he pleases? Are they not his, and his alone? This presents what is unquestionably the greatest problem of modern man: the irresponsible, devil-may-care use of power for man's own purposes, purposes often wholly unrelated or in direct opposition to the will and pur-

pose of God as made known in Christ.

When I was in college, Fred B. Smith, then one of our most widely known and respected Chrsitian laymen, had an address entitled, "America at the Crossroads." Well, the whole world stands at the crossroads just now. Which direction shall we take? Shall we use these incredible powers of nature in utter disregard of the moral and spiritual realities that inhere in our universe and thus destroy ourselves, or use them to enrich and bless our lives? God makes the difference in our answer. It may have been this fearful choice that led Professor Harold C. Urey, who shared in producing the atomic bomb, to say, "I am a frightened man. All the scientists that I know are frightened for their own lives and frightened for your lives." The scientists have full right to be frightened. For nothing is more ominous than to put in our hands power that we have not the moral or spiritual maturity wisely to employ. We are in the position of children using loaded revolvers as playthings, a position fraught with danger.

This is why it is so hard to understand the attitude of countless moderns, millions of Americans among them, who are making a god out of science. The God of the Bible, they seem to be saying, is no longer necessary. The god of the laboratory has dethroned Him.

There is some justification for their attitude. Consider, for example, the long drawn out and so largely futile conflict between science and religion. It has raged around such questions as these: Was the earth created in six days, as the Bible teaches, or through countless ages as science affirms? Are all the miracles in the Bible true, do not some of them clearly violate the orderly processes of a law-abiding universe? Is the appearance of comets "heavenly apparitions," "God's signs of warning to men," as the theologians of the sixteenth and even the seventeenth ce tury maintained, or are they natu phenomena? "Even to the end the seventeenth century, the oa usually required of professors astronomy in Europe forbade th teaching that comets obeyed natu laws."

These were just a few of the poi of conflict, and by and large scien won this battle. Many of us are gl it did. For the Church mistaking was trying to make the Bible authority on science, which it w never meant to be. The victory science has not by and large hu religion. Since God is the source all truth, what is genuinely true science cannot be in conflict wi what is genuinely true in religion. God divided against Himself t Himself cannot stand. This mode battle, however, which rages arou the moral or immoral use of pow is something else. That is why Pr fessor Urey is rightly frightened. F if science wins this one, we all lo

We need to clarifly our thinki here. For there is something religio about science. We must always d tinguish between the practical us to which science is put and the scie tific spirit that makes possible o inventions. The spirit that motiva the scientist is a deeply religious or What an example of teamwork, comradeship, of discipline, of pa ence, of humility. Think of the ti less devotion to truth! I wonder h many of us could say what Huxl the great scientist said. This was ideal: "To smite all humbugs ho ever big; to give a nobler tone science; to set an example of abst ence from petty personal cont veries and of toleration for eve thing but lying; to be indifferent to whether the work is recognized mine or not, so long as it is done."

What a magnificent statement! is not only vaguely religious; I d to say it is Christian. It seems much in line with the sipirt of h who devoted his life to the truth, w

ght not the praise of men but
e his life to a cause to assure the
mate triumph of which he died.
ppose that spirit ruled in politics.
ppose it was the spirit of the Con-
ss. Suppose it dominated our
rches. Let it be clearly under-
od, then, that we are saying noth-
against our scientists as such. We
thinking rather of the uses to
ich their inventions are put when
d is forgotten.

Nor, let it be said, are we even
icizing science as such. Actually
would be silly either to praise or
me science. For what, after all is
l and done, are our scientific in-
tions? Think again of the tiny
llite circling our globe. What is
It may seem a terrible letdown
ay this—but do you know what it
It is ultimately nothing more or
s than a tool, a tool in man's hand
nparable to a hammer, a shovel, or
aw. To be sure it is an incredibly
icate and complicated tool, but
l a tool. The wonder is not in that
y moon. The wonder lies in the
n who conceived it, constructed it,
ipped it with instruments to send
impulses, and who we are told
l soon be able so to control it as
bring it down to earth whenever
y so desire. Whether this and
ilar inventions are used destruc-
ly or constructively depends not
the tool but on the men who have
power to use it for their purposes,
they devilish or divine.

t seems to me that it would be
t as silly to blame science for
ill that may befall us as it would
to blame the revolver with which
gangster murders his victim, or
automobile with which the in-
icated driver imperils our high-
y. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not
our stars, but in ourselves, . . ."
t in our science, but in ourselves.
n ourselves! Can you see how
sled we are when we turn away
m the God of the Bible and pin
hopes on the god of the labora-
y? For when we pin our hopes of
the future on science, we are actually pininng them on ourselves. To make science our god is really to make ourselves our god, since science is ultimately a tool that does our bidding. One recalls the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?" "Him that shaketh it." Our peril lies not in the ax nor in the saw nor in the satellite, but in man who controls it.

Here then are two thoughts that come as we think of the satellite encircling our globe. It represents a view of nature that forgets the God behind nature, and consequently it symbolizes the incredible danger we confront, the danger that lies not in our inventions but in ourselves, the peril that lurks in the irresponsible use of power when divorced from the moral and ethical purposes of God.

III

Now let me suggest a final word. We have been talking about the satellite, but suppose we let the satellite speak to us. Did you see the first pictures of it on television? Did you hear that strange little "peep, peep" sound that comes from it at regular intervals? What is it saying? Whether it be the faint whisper of the satellite or the thunderous voice the hydrogen bomb, these children of our brain and hands seem to be saying to us something like this: "Man, you had better look to yourself. You are pininng your hope for the future on the science that has created us. You have turned away from the God of the Bible and have replaced Him with the god of the laboratory whose children we are. But this god of the laboratory — man — is only yourself, and you are not big enough to play God. You are strutting because you have mastered nature. You had better learn how to master yourself. You are straining your ears to catch the

sounds that come from outer space. You had better listen to the still small voice that speaks to your inmost soul. You have to put on dark glasses to shield your eyes from the blinding light that enfolds you when you explode one of your bombs. You had better turn to that other light, not so dazzling but more searching, that God has sent to illumine the world. For if you do not, we the children of your brain and hands, will turn and rend you."

I do believe that something like this is their message and, thank God, there are those who have ears to hear and are hearing. Even a man like Bertrand Russell, speaking of our faith in science, could write, "It is a curious fact that just when the man on the street has begun to believe thoroughly in science, the man in the laboratory has begun to lose his faith." Or here is Dr. Kirtley Mather, the geologist of Harvard: "The great imperative problems of our day are not in the area of physics or chemistry but in that of ethics and morals. Something may be denoted as good will, the discerning love of the religion exemplified by Jesus." Or listen to Professor Arthur Compton, who has as much to do with our atomic program as anyone, and more than most. This noted scientist closes his able book "Atomic Quest" with these prophetic words: "Within us is a still small voice — compelling, insistent. As we listen we know that the important thing is not the state, nor the power of the atom, nor the mighty machines of industry; it is the heart of man. To all who hear, this inner voice gives the same message. Because it tells that the soul of man is the true measure of value, we know that it is within our power to harness the energy of the atom for peace. Because th still small voice speaks to all me everywhere, we have a firm basis fo our hope that freedom will endure

The testimony of this thoughtfu man should inspire our hearts an strengthen our hands. The hope o man does not lie in his ability t explore interstellar space. It lies rath er in the inner recesses of his ow soul, cleansed, illumined, empowe ed by God's spirit. The work of th church in days like these, whe events world-startling or world-shak ing occur, must seem to us at time trivial or irrelevant. Never believe i Not yonder where satellites soar, bu here and in numberless other church es man's future is being formed, h destiny determined. For here th spotlight is turned on man himsel In man himself, not the works of h hand or the products of his brain, lie our only hope or despair.

The key to the redemption of ou world from the follies and excesse of man's unbridled and undiscipline egotism lies in the gospel of Chris in which man confronts God. With out God he is not only "a trouble wanderer upon a darkened earth, but the creator of darkness and s his own worst enemy.

As members of the Christia church it is as though God had plac ed in our hands this key. It is th Master Key. Let it not rust awa from lack of use or carelesly fa from our hands.

Lead on, O King Eternal,
We follow, not with fears,
For gladness breaks like morning
Where'er thy face appears:
Thy cross is lifted o'er us;
We journey in its light;
The crown awaits the conquest;
Lead on, O God of might.

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING — **Continued from page 2**

always refreshing in language and inspirational in tone. Dozens of sermon-starters, ideas, and well-developed outlines are included in this rich source volume. (Westminister, 23 pp., $3.75)

That Revolutionary—Christ by A lan Knight Chalmers is a persuasiv

d inspiring series of studies on the actical implications of Christ's gos- l and represents the bold social spel which today has been too eatly neglected. Much of the book lects the religion-in-action experi- ces of the author who has been at e front when the vigorous witness the church combats an alien socie- Perhaps the most valuable por- ns of the book concern the tech- ques which have proven valuable the Christian's conquest of social d personal sins. (Scribner, 152 pp., .95)

Reality and Prayer by John B. Ma- e is a profoundly creative study of ayer in the light of tradition and story and in terms of the claims of ence, philosophy and psychology. ritten for those who wish to plumb e depths for a reawakened appre- tion of the methods and meanings prayer, this book offers the best idance since the publication of the oks by Fosdick, Buttrick and Day. arper & Brothers, 239 pp., $3.50)

Two autobiographies will appeal pastors. **Signs in the Storm** is Jo- ph Nemes' own story of "how God suced me from a Communist pri- n; how he led me safely along dan- rous roads over a distance of more an three hundred miles; how I met m face to face in the depths of a ssian prison, and how he brought e out of there, from the arms of rtain death." Nemes, a Hungarian ristian, relates graphically the ry of his outward circumstances d of his inner crises, and so the ok is a chronicle set against the story of our times as well as a rec- d of a sincere and sensitive spirit- l pilgrimage. (Abingdon, 225 pp.,) The second book, **Prison Is My rish,** is the remarkable story of ev. Park Tucker, chaplain in the lanta federal pentitentiary. Tucker ceived national recognition when was featured on "This Is Your fe" last year. This book, which has l the high drama of tragedy, tells so with intimate candor of the mind of the inmate as he meets the inter- preter of the mind of Christ. (Revell, 191 pp., $2.95)

This Way, Please is a volume of extraordinarily forceful sermons by Roy O. McClain, minister of Atlanta's 6000-member First Baptist Church. Part I is titled "The Way Defined" and part II on "Sins of the Church" is provocative and challenging, some- thing which will stir the lethargy of complacent modern churchmen. The author writes with a verve that is compelling and his use of dramatic adjectives, verbs and phrases makes the sermons highly effective. The author's message is without ordinary blandness and gets to the nerve-cen- ter of the gospel without hesitation. (Revell, 217 pp., $3)

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WORTH QUOTING –

Continued from page 2

ately it gives way, for the log is rot- ten. Its collapse is sudden; but months and years of summer rains and winter snows have slowly been corrupting the log and causing it to distintegrate and decay. The Johns- town dam gave way with a roar and crash in a moment of time on that May day in 1889, and two thousand perished in the raging torrent; but for weeks and months the waters imprisoned by the dam had slowly, unobservedly, been eroding the wall of the dam. So it is with moral disast- ers. There must have been something in David's history before this fall which was preparing the way for it.

Clarence E. Macartney in **The Woman of Tekoah and Other Sermons** (Ab- ingdon)

* * *

We are in danger of making ma- chinery a substitute for personal quality, and we try to make an in- stitution fill the gap when the spirit of fellowship departs. The only pro- tection we have is that Christians who are also church members shall not forget their pastoral functions.

The legend says that the devil walked down the street one day with a friend. They noticed a man ahead bending over to pick up an object. The friend asked, "What did that man pick up?" The devil replied, "A piece of the truth." "That is bad business for you," said the friend. But the devil answered, "Not at all. I am going to let him organize it." Have you noticed how truth loses its appeal and power when it gets organized? Do you observe that the Church loses its influence when it stands in the world as a mighty machine rather than a marching army? Christians must never neglect or minimize their pastoral responsibility, and the laity must remember that one of the names for Christians is pastor.

Gerald Kennedy in **The Christian and His America** (Harper)

* * *

There was a woman who wanted to get her neighbor's opinion about another woman without committing herself. When she inquired about her, her neighbor replied hesitantly: "Well, at least she is a good woman." Whereupon the other answered eagerly, "I don't like her either." Thus do we interpret goodness. It is little wonder that the world so often passes by the Church when it is seeking relaxation or stimulation.

Gerald Kennedy

* * *

The English essayist Hazlitt once commented that of all creatures only human beings laugh and weep, because they alone can perceive the difference between things as they are and things as they ought to be or turn out to be. This distinctly human capacity to perceive incongruities is the psychology behind what sometimes happens to us at our places of worship . . . We often begin worship with a "there's-nothing-wrong-with-me" (or "there's-nothing-wrong-with-my-society") attitude, but soon we perceive a personal incongruity as we come to compare ourselves with a saint, Jesus of Nazareth, or an Ol Testament worthy: or we note th social incongruity as we compare ou society with the Kingdom of Goo "God, be merciful to us, sinners," w think, and maybe we weep.

Wesley N. Haines

* * *

Let me then summarize how physicist now views man's freedom It is not from scientific observatio that we know man is free. Science i incapable of telling whether a per son's acts are free or not. Freedom i not something that one can touch o measure. We know it through ou own innermost feelings. The first es sential of freedom is the desire t attain something that one consider good. But desire lies outside th realm of science — at least outsid of physics. You can't locate desire a somewhere in space. Similarly ou recognition that within limits we ca do what we try to do is not a matte of measurement or external observa tion. It is a matter of immediat awareness. There is nothing in suc awareness of freedom that is incon sistent with science. Freedom does however, involve the additional de termining factor of choice, abou which science tells us nothing.

The world does . . . respond to my efforts. And the findings of scienc . . . are completely consistent wit this experience.

Thus the way is cleared for ou great task. We are free to shape ou destiny. In this undertaking we wil find our greatest freedom.

Arthur H. Compton in **The Atlantic**

* * *

In order to create, a man must b dissatisfied. The creative individua in a driven man. He has an inne compulsion to bring something nev into the world, to make the worl different. This is as true of the scien tist as of the artist or poet.

Harold Gershinowitz

PHILLIPS PACKER ELLIOTT
RAYMOND E. BALCOMB
GENE E. BARTLETT

The Prodigal Son

CERTAIN MAN HAD TWO SONS

Phillips Packer Elliott, First Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, New York

f we had to part with all the ables save one, I am sure that st would say, "Keep the parable the prodigal son." It would be a d choice, and some we could dly part with. But this one we ect could part with least of all — all means, keep the parable of the digal son.

his is not only because it is beau- lly and simply told, not only be- se it is so familiar in its setting of ne and parent-child, and brother- ther relationship, but chiefly be- se it deals with the soul's strug- the constant conflict between t and wrong within the human rt. The inner part of the story is re important than the outer. The on is spiritual, emotional, and this s our emotions as well.

low familiar the story is to us! younger son, entitled to a one- d share of the inheritance, asked his portion, and shortly there- r departed. He squandered his ney and his life, in "living ruin- ly" as the more accurate transla- has it. Probably not only did ruin himself financially, but also his health and his character. Hard es came, he began to be in want, was forced to take the most men- kind of work — to a Jew an un- evably degrading task — feeding ne. Suddenly the revulsion set in, "came to himself" as the record it, he remembered his home and even the servants were better than he now, and so homeward set his feet and face, expecting to received, but only on the most dging terms. Christina Rosetti's m puts it thus:

ich and blessed those servants,
rather
Than I who see not my father's face!
I will arise and go to my father—
"Fallen of sonship, beggared of grace,
Grant me father, a servant's place."

But his father met him afar aff, and much to the disgust of the brother who had stayed at home all the time, provided the most generous and joyous welcome to the son who had been to all intents and purposes dead, but was now alive again, had been lost and was found.

Let us think of some of the meanings which stand out in this parable. There are many lessons here, so many that we can never exhaust them, and we do well to read it over and over again, no matter how familiar we may think it to be.

I

First, it shows us what it means to be separated from God. One sees here a growing apartness, an isolation of a personality. He is away from his own home, which was perhaps natural, but he did not move into any other worthwhile relationship. Rather he moved into evil; he "lived ruinously" and his separation from his fellows continued and deepened. There is a cold quality to the only relationship indicated — "he joined himself to a citizen of that country." It was this citizen who set him to work feeding his swine.

How deceptive evil is at first! It seems highly social, and the appointed way to make friends. It is the good person who seems the lonely person; his standards set him apart. But let the standards down, don't be too particular about your speech or

habits, and you will have lots of friends. So it often seems, especially in our highly social society.

But how quickly these friends fall away! Companionship in evil never lasts. One senses the gathering isolation of this young man, as his dissolute way continued. It is recorded that "no man gave unto him." It may mean food, it may mean the deeper gifts of friendship and esteem. At any rate, no one gave him anything. No one even seemed to know or care whether he existed. You will recall that Judas, overcome with remorse, went back to his colleagues in the betrayal, and tried to return the money. "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." They replied: "What is that to us? See thou to that." There was no one left for him, not even his companions in evil, and he went out and hanged himself.

It is separation from God that is the worst kind of separation. One cannot always be on friendly terms with one's fellows. Differences are bound to arise and one must stand alone. And it is possible to stand alone if one is not separated from God. It is that final separation which makes for despair. And it is that which evil means; it means apartness, alienation, no connection with God.

To many this may not seem so serious, nor so unnatural. We rather assume separation. One cannot expect to be very close to Him. We attribute our sense of remoteness to the fact that we have not thought very much about Him, have not prayed with regularity. One can cultivate God as one cultivates any intellectual or cultural field of interest. Or is the problem more basic, in the fact that we are not acting in the right way or desiring the right things? Our lives, consequently, are not in a position or a condition to feel God near. Evil keeps pulling a person further and further away from God, so that He becomes less and less real. We find that we do not "talk the same language," or think the same thoughts.

At first we may think of this a release. The younger son obvious thought of it so as he left his father house with his share of the inheri ance in his pocket. But then he realized it to be bondage, the bondage separation, separation from men, b even worse, separation from Go That was the result and that t price of evil.

II

Think, next, of the never-failin never defeated, love of God. The ce tral figure in the parable is not t son, but the father; not the prodig but the parent. Through all that t boy did and was, through the da of evil and humiliation, he kept ca ing for him with a love that nev failed.

There is a tendency nowadays criticize the father in such cases this. Here certainly was a juven delinquent and, as everyone knov the cause of a juvenile delinquent a careless parent. Something mu have been wrong in that home or t boy would not have wanted to lea or, leaving, would not have acted he did. The father was a tyrant not severe enough; he punished h too often or not often enuogh; showed him too much affection he showed him too little! Whatev he did, it was wrong, and the bla was largely his. So would run m interpretations of the story tod Perhaps the one fair thing in t analysis would be that he had managed to get into the boy su standards as would keep him straig but he was swept away into riotc living, something which his home e vironment had made him desire ra er than scorn and reject.

But the great fact about the fat is the unyielding quality of his lo He did not give it up for a minu He might have been expected to g way, since the boy did so many thi that hurt him and essentially re diated his love. We know that human love can be so scorned that

s; it can take nothing more. Our ɔtions are not indestructible, but be destroyed. They sometimes ter themselves against a wall of tility or indifference until there ıo strength left.

That is why the father's love is so ıarkable. It continues full and ɔng. When the son turns and com- back he finds no reluctant, half- ɔn door, but down the road love ɛts him, and a father's tears are ing into the dust of the path as greets his son almost as soon as he s him coming. The other day in hone booth I heard a voice almost uting so that all could hear — "I'm ne, I'm home for good." So the digal came home, came home for ɔd, to a home that was glad to re him come back, to a home t welcomed him with love that never died.

The whole basis of this story, then, he unfailing love of God. What- r else takes place, that goes on. goes on in the story and in the ɔle of life. We always assume the e of God, we count on it in times need and distress. It is not just fact of God that matters, impor- t as that is. Most people believe t God exists. But what is His nat- ? — that is the important question. w and then some action on the t of a person is so "super-human" ve term it, that we see what great ɔurces can be found. A great act of rage or loyalty or love will mpt us to say "this is Godlike." err is human; to forgive divine." people do forgive and in that take of divinity; and so do they their love for one another. God ıes into their lives to make them He is.

The Cross revealed this to us so t we can never forget. Love is e tested in such fashion as to troy it altogether — or we would ık. No decent emotion could be ɛcted to withstand this treatment. e marvel of the Cross lies in the t that love was able to bear it, to emerge from it secure and triumph- ant and even stronger than before. That is the message and the mircale of the Christian gospel; this is the revelation which is in Christ — that love is stronger than hate, and that for us always there is the Father's house and the Father's unfailing love.

III

Finally, this parable shows us that life can change for good. "And when he came to himself" — he was ready to go back and to try a new way. We are rather fatalistic about human nature, whether of ourselves or of others. We talk about change but we do not expect it to happen. If it does happen, we expect it to happen for the worse.

The question is — what are we like basically? When you "come to your- self" what do you find? We are many selves, to be sure, and we seem to find different things with each self- examination. Some would say "You couldn't bear to see yourself as you really are." The good in life is acci- dental; the evil is basic material.

But the experience of this young man was otherwise. Basically, he was good, and he found this when he came to himself. He recoiled at a certain point from his evil ways. There was a place where he was confronted with a standard for his life, which said, "Thus far and no farther." There came the sudden realization of what he was meant to be, a shaft of divinity penetrated the shadows of his humanity and re- vealed to him his best and most real self.

One always has something to which he can turn to be saved. There is a self that will stand by you if you reach it. During these weeks of sac- red meaning, when we turn our minds toward Christ, let us turn them also upon ourselves. That is His desire. Never lose confidence in your own goodness. To publicans and sinners as to this prodigal the mes- sage was "come to yourself."

We say, "I'm not a prodigal. I don't

need this." But who can say that? We are all in a far country, we have wasted our substance. We know this to be true. And now we are bidden to come to our true selves. That is the essential Christian decision — be yourself in all your goodness and worth. Jesus showed us what we are. His trust in us did that, and we can never forget that picture. In Middleton Murry's "Jesus Man of Genius," the temptor is represented as taunting Christ because he regards m as God's sons. He reveals them all their sin and squalor and th says, "Look at them — they are n sons." And Jesus replies, "They a God's sons if they but knew it."

Let us then come to ourselves. L us see ourselves as we are, as Chr sees us. Then let us, with the old, b ever new, resolve, say, "I will ari and go to my Father."

ON BEING LOST IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

Raymond E. Balcomb, First Methodist Church, Medford, Oregon

One of Jesus' most familiar stories leaves us with mixed emotions. Everyone is glad, of course, when a young prodigal comes to his senses and mends his ways. And everyone is glad when a father, nearing the end of the trail, has his heart warmed by the return of the wanderer whose excesses could not but cause him heartache. But we do not quite know what to think about the older brother. On the one hand we mark him as a kill-joy and wholly lacking in the love a brother ought to have for another. We acknowledge that it is childish of him to sulk outside while the welcome home party goes on inside.

The older boy is something less than wholly admirable, but we almost instinctively feel that there is something to be said for him and his attitude. After all, he had been loyal, he had been tending to business. Why should he be very enthusiastic about someone who had been playing both ends against the middle, who had eaten his cake and was having it too? As the older brother saw it, it was something like the woman who came with her troubles to the minister. "Reverend," she sobbed, "something has to be done about my husband. He doesn't come home at night; he doesn't help with the children; he doesn't give us enough money to live on. Instead, he's gallivanting all over town, gambling, drinking, running after wome "You have my deepest sympath commiserated the man of the clo "Your husband is a miserable sinne "A sinner he is, Reverend," she sa "but miserable, no. He's having t time of his life." So it must have a peared to the older son, and so appears to many of us. It does seem quite fair.

I used to feel that probably m of the trouble was the father's fau He was taking his older son granted, and the boy had a right feel neglected. I feel so no long If a child of mine were to retu from death to life I would count t occasion one for rejoicing. And if r other children sullenly objected could do no more than to put th feelings down to immaturity and hope that they would one day und stand a parent's heart, "you are ways with me, and all that is mine yours."

One of the things that Jesus mea to say through the story, I belie is that it is perfectly possible to lost in your own backyard. The o prodigals are not those who squan er their money in a "far countr Many a decent and honest and r pectable person needs the forgivi love of the Father just as much those who go in for riotous livi And because most of us fall into t category of decent and honest a respectable folks, rather than t

hose whose sins are those of the ots and the hogs, it's worth our le to see just where this older her's trouble lay. How could he lost so close to home?

I

irst of all, **it is plain that he was in jealously.** Even a cursory read- discloses that familiar green-eyed ster. The boy is coming in after ard day's work; he hears the d of music and laughter and cing and gaity. He inquires na- lly enough, what's going on. The s sound like favoritism and ang- him; he can hardly wait to up- d his father with the accusation: never gave me a kid. You killed him the fatted calf." The diction- says that to be jealous is to be ubled by the belief, suspicion, ear that the good which one de- to gain or keep for oneself has or may be diverted to another; tful towards another on account nown or suspected rivalry." And its the definition!

ere is another picture in the , drawn from life, which shows an lost in jealously. It chronicles rise of David to eminence in Saul's house and as one of his enants. But when David's fame warrior began to eclipse that of when the dancing girls cele- ng a victory began to chant that

Saul has slain his thousands
And David his ten thousands,

ead that Saul "was very angry" he "eyed David from that day And eventually, eaten away by nvy and suspicion and jealousy, lost his mind and his kingdom died by his own hand.

hat was true of them is true also . You don't have to live a gross corrupt life to be lost in jealousy. can do it, literally, in your own yard. Here is an advertisement a seed catalog. "If your neigh- has a flower he is very proud t us know and we will supply of one larger or in an entirely new color. We specialize in this work."

Jealousy, whether large or small, is one of the most corrosive acids which attack personality. Do you remember Othello, "the Moor of Venice"? He was a good man, an honest, sincere, just, and loving man. Strength and honor were his clothing. But when the cunning Iago has once planted the seed of jealousy his nobility deteriorates before our very eyes. Trifles are magnified; the most innocent of intentions are distorted; and finally, by the end of the play, he was lost — like the older brother — in jealousy.

II

In the second place **this young man lost in feeling sorry for himself.** His wail, as I am sure that many a parent will recognize, was "nobody loves me." He was mightily aggrieved; his ego was wounded; his feelings were hurt. Since no one else seemed to seem sorry for him he determined to feel sorry for himself; he refused to go in and join the fun.

Now the person who perpetually feels sorry for himself is lost because he's either a specimen of arrested development or emotionally ill. There are times when I refuse to call on a person who is quite obviously unwell. I offer to see them in my office, but if they will not come I will not go. Is this heartless or unkind? I trust not. Every person experienced in dealing with mental and emotional upsets knows that sometimes by going to persons to help them you simply increase their trouble. You minister to their own feelings of sympathy for themselves. And since their main trouble is that they tend to structure the external situation so as to feel more sorry for themselves, one who goes to them merely makes their problem worse!

How easy it is to feel sorry for ourselves! In that wonderful story, **The Last Hurrah,** one interesting scene details a wake among the loyal

constituency of Mayor Skeffington. The dead man had not led what you would call an exemplary life; he was not even what one preacher once characterized as "a respected sinner"! Since no one could think of anything good to say about him, they honored him best by their silence. His wife, however, with the loyalty born of love, felt compelled to find some redeeming thing about him. So finally she ventured, "He was a good man, Frank, but he had such bad luck." Isn't that the way we're apt to think about ourselves — we really would have done better, but luck was against us, we never got "the breaks," we never really had a chance!

We see self-pity for what it is, do we not, when we see some one go through a difficult time without yielding to it? Shortly after the tragic accidental death of his seventeen-year-old daughter, William Allen White wrote a private letter to a friend. In it he said: "It was a terrible stroke and we are infinitely lonely, but we are not shaking the bars of this finite cage and asking unanswerable questions of fate. We only know that we do not know; that it is all mysterious. Yet, because our most uncommon lot of happiness for twenty-seven years has, by this cruel circumstance, been made the common lot, we haven't become dubious of the goodness of God and the decency of man. Mary is net gain. To have had her seventeen years, joyous, rollicking and wise, so tremendously human in all her weaknesses and in her strength, is blessing enough for any parent. We have no right to ask for more."

The older brother, and many another person, got lost in his own backyard simply by feeling sorry for himself.

III

In the third place, **he was lost in self-rightousness.** Hear his holier-than-thou declamation! "Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your comma . . . But this son of yours . . . devo ed your living with harlots." He c sociated himself in his purity fr the besmirched brother.

If jealousy is one of the most c rosive ways to be lost in your o backyard, and feeling sorry for o self one of the most debilitating, c tainly self-righteousness is one of most subtle. And it is surely one the most common failings of religi people. Paul once suffered from it; did Luther; so did Wesley; and do most of us. The late Sena George Wharton Pepper, who v himself a distinguished layman in Episcopal Church, tells in his au biography of an incident involv Wendell Phillips, the noted ni teenth century reformer and ora He was busily reading on a tr when a self-assured stranger po a religious tract into his hands briskly remarked, "My business is save souls from hell." Without lo ing up, Phillips replied, "I'd sugg that you go there and attend to It was a deserved rebuke, "the p fect squelch." We church people easily set ourselves up as the ju and jury for others.

Darrel Berg recently quoted a netrating remark by the Eng Christian, Evelyn Underhill. noted that in the Book of the Rev tion that "it is the saints and el nearest God who cast down t crowns when they adore Him. lesser fry, further off, are quite c tent to go on wearing theirs." Q so! The great humble, the small self-righteous.

IV

Finally, will you note a fo thing? **This young man was lost his own backyard and didn't kno** He was sublimely oblivious to own failures. It was plain enoug him that his brother had gotten the reservation, but he didn't k that in his own way he had too

So with us all. The points I h